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ABSTRACT

This paper elaborates some of the ways in which coauthors understood themselves to be framed individually and together by the task of writing a chapter of the fourth annual American Educational Research Association "Handbook of Research on Teaching." With one author in Australia and the other in England, the collaborative process was greatly complicated, especially since the topic for the proposed chapter was to be marginal research on teaching. Their different perspectives, that of a poststructural scholar and a more orthodox scholar, had to be recognized and accommodated, as did their very different writing styles. The feelings caused by the process of writing with a "disembodied," unfamiliar coauthor are described. (Contains 11 references.) (SLD)

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Double Trouble:
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Double Trouble: Co-authorship as a subversive activity[1]

David Hamilton[2] and Erica McWilliam[3]

Erica:

The way from ignorance to knowledge, as Shoshana Felman (1982:27) explains, is not linear and cumulative but rather proceeds through discontinuities, breakthroughs, leaps, regressions and deferred action. There can be no more powerful reminder of this fact for any writer than in taking up the challenge to produce a chapter of the Handbook with a co-author who must remain throughout an absent presence, a volatile body of text, an email address. For us - David Hamilton, then at the University of Liverpool, England and Erica McWilliam, of the Queensland University of Technology Australia – the textual production was made doubly demanding inasmuch as the theme of our chapter was to be 'marginal research on teaching' with all of its currents, eddies and idiosyncrasies. Eccentric processes for reflecting on ex-centric practices - we were clearly in double trouble!

This brief paper elaborates some of the ways we two authors understood ourselves to be framed (individually and collectively) in and by the writing task. We proceed separately to comment on the sum of deviant practices our joint 'labour of reinscription' (Kirby, 1993:26) has put us up to. Most importantly, we want to comment on what we have learned about academic writing as a disembodied collaboration as well as a process that is always seductively and depressingly lacking in prescription.

David:

The invitation to contribute to the fourth Handbook took me back down memory lane. I had read the first – 1963 - edition as I wrestled with my doctorate in the early 1970s. I declined an invitation to contribute to the third edition. And I served as reviewer for the same volume, albeit for a chapter that did not appear. Could I find my way back to the editorial concerns of the 1990s? I felt apprehensive; I still do.

The commissioning letter requested a chapter on 'Multiple Voices in Research on Teaching' comprising:

> An analytic and research summary (what kind of research is conducted within these various traditions) that focusses on the historical and conceptual foundations of the many current voices—those on the edge: critical pedagogy, post coonial (sic), feminist, gay and lesbian, postmodern.

Fortuitously, the invitation came at a good time. I was in the middle of a period of study leave. There was time to revisit the past. But how could this difficult terrain be navigated and traversed? My only response to such difficulties is to assume they don't exist. 'Start writing' I tell myself. But where?

I returned to the beginning-- the first Handbook. Reading my way back into the literature offered a measure of quasi-security. I felt I was doing something, even if I had no idea where I was going. I longed for signposts, pathways that might help me to initiate,

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extend and even finesse an argument over more than 22000 words. By the time Erica's appointment had been confirmed, I had written 8,000 words. Hardly any remain in the final version.

With this rubric, we searched for an idea to structure the chapter. We could keep 'multiple voices' as a working title. But We needed, somehow, to get behind its pluralist, rainbow sentiments. Eventually, we became conscious of a triple anniversary: the first Handbook had appeared in the same year as Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique and the same year that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led and equally-seminal Civil Rights March on Washington DC.

1963, then, provided a starting point for our narrative. If the original Handbook had sought to accumulate and assimilate the behavioural science wisdom of the previous decades, Friedan and King projected a different agenda:

> We do not ask you (Dr. King argued in 1966) to march by our side, although as citizens, you are free and welcome to do so. Rather, we ask you to focus on the fresh social issues of our day; to move from observing operant learning, the psychology of risk...to the test-tubes of Watts, Harlem, Selma, and Bogaloosa. We ask you to make society's problems your laboratory . We ask you to translate your data into direction--direction for action (quoted in Noffke, 1997, first page)

We had a long way to go but, gradually, we came to terms with the editorial board's request. We also agreed that our task was to write a narrative for graduate students who, typically, had been born after the 1960s.

Nevertheless, the dislocations of distance meant that we worked in splendid isolation, more by desperation than by design. We maintained good contact with Virginia Richardson (our editor); and we worked in iterative cycles.

There was no time for prolonged deliberation. We produce over-the-top, provocative drafts to flush out forthright yet focused reaction. We accepted the review panel's judgement. And, above all, we trusted each other. In fact, our entire face to face contact was probably less than 5 hours: two session at AERA96 (New York) and 3 hours in Brisbane.

So how, in fact, did the writing unfold? We built on the fact that the discourses prefigured by Friedan and King were at variance with those shared by contributors to the first handbook. In turn, we used a distinction from European rather than Anglo-American thought. We suggest the concerns of the first Handbook were 'didactic' (cf. instruction), whereas the later Handbooks have gradually turned towards a weaker framing for didactics. This weakening, we suggest, has been associated with an English-language resurgence of the word 'pedagogy'. Thus, we have coupled Betty Friedan and Martin Luther King's arguments of the 1960s with Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1971) and Basil Bernstein's 'On the classification and Framing of educational Knowledge' (1971).

But when, how and why did this sea-change from didactics to pedagogics occur in North America? We are still unsure. Nevertheless, we try to answer this questions in the first half of our chapter. We not only invoke the consequences of the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, we also implicate the post-positivist turns – or glides – executed over the same period by Donald Campbell, Lee J. Cronbach, Sam Messick and, at one point, even Nate Gage (editor of the 1963 Handbook).

The technocratic dream of the Enlightenment – that science would inexorably lead to social emancipation – became soured in the nineteen sixties and seventies. Science, including research on teaching, had its downsides. The second half of our chapter, therefore, recounts the 'historical and conceptual foundations' of the diaspora of 'current voices' that, in different ways, has discomforted and transcended the assumed truths of the enlightenment project.

The reviewers were generous. We were in sight of the end. But there was still much to be done with regard to the conventions of US book design and publication. We replaced our out of date editions of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association)and we inserted subheadings every 600 words.

But that was not all. How could we finish our text? Indeed, what choices did we have? We had to finish it. But could we find an ending that was not a conclusion? And could we not alos finess the uncertainty of it all – something we have attempted in this afterword? Then as now, Erica found a way, as she might put it, to irony out the ending. Thanks.

Erica:

For me as a writer there were a number of dilemmas the process of writing confronted me with, not the least of these being the matter of register. Given that my sole authored work is very much geared towards 'negotiating enabling violations' (Spivak, 1989) in orthodox academic spaces, the invitation to provide a meta-commentary on the genealogy of 'teaching research as violation' meant that I would have at least to reconsider thevalue of a 'seriously playful' text of the sort I am practised at writing.

Would this mean that my/our text would suffer from irony deficiency (a condition that bedevils much of the leadership and management literature on 'quality' teaching and learning)? I understood this problem to be complicated by the fact that I was a co-author, writing with a principal author for whom finding an appropriate scholarly register was unlikely to be such an issue. It was not that I regarded David's work as an unproblematic manifestation of 'His Master's Voice' - far from it - but I felt that he was more practised in 'orthodox scholarship' than I. This was not and is not for me a matter for self-flagellation - merely an observation about how our work has been differently constituted.

As a poststructural scholar, I am practised in locating myself 'on the verandahs' of academe. Judith Allen (1992:71) uses this term in her discussion of the contradictions apparent in the metaphorical constructions of feminist theorising - homelessness, exile and exclusion outside academe, and imprisonment, alienation or mutedness within it. She mentions the metaphor of the 'sleepout syndrome', particularly pertinent to Australia, where the colonial verandah was converted to accommodate the more populous household of post-war years. I have exploited this sort of metaphorical positioning of feminist theorising because it is both connected with and marginal to orthodox scholastic space. Though outside the security of the residence proper, the verandah can also provide much-needed relief from the heat of the kitchen. Being 'verandahed' can mean staying fresh and cool, although it does risk being exposed to unruly elements.

Now the academic house has become increasingly crowded. Impertinently, irreverently, new bodies have moved in to occupy what were once spaces reserved for the Old White Boys Club. As disparate groups press each other, jostling for semiotic space, I have sought to contribute to friction and untidiness, to leave bits of feminist theoretical bric-a-brac scattered throughout the halls of academe, to give academics cause to watch where they put their theoretical feet, and, when it seems apposite, to indulge myself in the free-play possibilities of cool outside spaces. Now I was being called into the house proper to

comment on the architecture, in particular the contribution made by the verandah to the overall design. And, as my early drafts show, I was not up to the task. I could of course rationalise this inability as a refusal to generate the 'God's eye view' - the meta-narrative - that I was so practised in critiquing. However, it was more difficult to confront the fact of this as a lack of humility on my part - an inability to do other than untidying work.

The Handbook is a text which tidies scholarship. And this is a very valuable role as far as doctoral students are concerned. As any dissertation supervisor is aware, the 'big picture' - the overview, the map of the terrain - is invaluable to the aspiring academic - as of course it continues to be for all academics. It is not simply that we scholars now spend less time in the bibliotheque than we do in the business of university life. Nor is the big picture literature review always valuable because it is right. It is that some masochistic soul bothered to ensure that it is written - a platform to stand on, a wall to wail beside, an edifice to rail against.

The 'doing' project of such a review demands a somewhat different register from the 'undoing' project of educational critique. While it should not require an end of advocacy, it certainly demands a somewhat different tone, including a more measured pace that takes less for granted than writing for 'in club' intellectual sub-cultures. It is not better or worse for this - merely different. And it is the precise nature of this difference that I have had to struggle with.

A problem of a different nature was the problem of writing a text with a disembodied other - as David explained earlier, a problem of the dislocation that distance means for bodies engaged in a joint project. For me at least the project of scholarly writing is always an intimate and physical one. I note that Madeleine Grumet (1995) too speaks of the intimate and physical nature of writing, but not as 'authentic' , 'sincere' or even 'personal' (p.38). She reflects on the means by which she engages with her students' texts as a particular sort of embodied 'performance' on her part:

> I denied the intimacy of my reading by abstaining from writing on theirpapers...I read [the student papers] in my green robe, but I typed my responses on the word processor, deliberately interposing the machine, the type of our texts, between our bodies. We made ourselves up in typedface...I do confess that I signed my name, Madeleine, in black ink, at the bottom of the page. (p.39).

Here Grumet indicates how she performs her academic work to fix a particular sort of difference between teacher and student, and yet at the same time, consciously performs the personal by way of the handwritten signature.

However, the process of collaborative writing does demand the erasure of difference in terms of the final textual product. Whether the 'team' is hierarchically organised or not, the well-written co-authored text should be characterised by a sort of seamlessness that belies the difference of author and author. Alternatively, as in this piece of writing, the authors may choose to insist on the difference that their difference makes, but overall text will must exhibit epistemological coherence and, hopefully, not too many hiccups in terms of stylistic variation.

I presume that even the most naive reader can perceive the quite marked stylistic difference between David's texts and my own. In the past, the generation of a single text as a 'joint production' has involved me always in looking at the difference of the other body, not simply as a body of text on a page, but as a physical body who utters differently, laughs differently, moves differently. Whatever an email address offered me as a

volatile 'body', it gave me none of the clues I seemed to need to proceed with creating the body of the text. I continue to be interested in the matter of scholarship - ie the extent to which anatomical bodies and their transmutation through technology (phone, fax, email, video image) matter in terms of the pedagogical work necessary to generate ideas with others. However my incursion into the literature on information technology has so far not helped me to grapple with the corpor/realities of university pedagogy or the role of physical bodies in the process of writing.

Since I began the unfamiliar process of 'disembodied' writing, I have asked other academics about their experiences of 'virtual collaboration' toproduce academic texts. I have only found one who had never met their co-writer face to face at some time, although I am sure that it is an increasingly common experience. The Australian academic who had completed the virtual writing task indicated that 'we had to arrange to meet as soon as possible' although he was not really able to explain why.

In order to proceed, I needed firstly to get a physical description of David - I had read his work but had never met him. I 'got closer' when I heard his voice for the first time when he phoned me in New York (AERA 1996). What difference might it have made to the text if we had never met? Perhaps none.

What was I looking for on his body? What was inscribed there that would tell me how to collaborate? I asking these questions, I do not have the intention of trying to generate a romance around the physical body and its contribution to intellectual life. I am aware of the power of technology to render every body perfect -to make over the inadequate body that is so fearful of the corporeal performance. Roland Barthes acknowledges the significance of this fear foracademics:

> I can do everything with my language but not with my body. What I hide by my language, my body utters. I can deliberately mould my message, not my voice. By my voice, whatever it says, that other will recognise that 'something is wrong with me'. ...My body is a stubborn child, my language is a very civilised adult. (1978: 45)

So what was it that I needed from the 'stubborn child' that was David's body? And what did I need him to see in/on me in order for me to push on with the task?

I have not learnt the answers to these questions, so perhaps I have not proceeded from ignorance to knowledge at all. However, I continue to try to ask different questions in the hope that they will prove to be better questions, not to solve my problems as an educator or to solve my students problems but to work better within the conditions which we are so used to calling context. I do not expect liberation, and transformation always seems to turn out to be a much more uncertain drama than we hope. I have not been transformed or liberated by the process of writing the chapter. However, I have been challenged to ask some different questions about my practice.

Endnotes:

1.Judith Butler's Bodies that Matter (1993) is a useful exploration of the double sense that can be made of this term

2. I have written elsewhere (McWilliam, 1997) about whether 'I need to see you' the familiar and poignant cry of the undergraduate or postgraduate student in search of pedagogical salvation -- is merely a manifestation of the desire for social interaction or something else. I ask why our students so often insist that an e-mail or a phone call, however carefully crafted and performed, just won't do. What difference does it make to

teaching and learning whether my students can look at my material body or not? What are the students wanting to read and re-read that is inscribed on my body and in my utterance? How does my material body work in ways that can be productive for students?

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